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Somalia: Threats to Stability

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An Intelligence Assessment

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*ALA 85-10058
June 1985*

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An Intelligence Assessment

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This paper was prepared by [redacted]
Office of African and Latin American Analysis [redacted]
[redacted] contributions from [redacted]
the Office of Central Reference. It was coordinated
with the Directorate of Operations. [redacted]

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Comments and queries are welcome and may be
directed to the Chief, Africa Division, ALA, [redacted]
[redacted]

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Key Judgments

*Information available
as of 5 June 1985
was used in this report.*

The continuing erosion of President Siad's support base raises serious questions about the stability of his regime.

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According to US Embassy and [] dissatisfaction is growing within the military over the marked inferiority of Somali forces to those of arch-rival Ethiopia. The Army had expected the West—and the United States in particular—to provide large amounts of military hardware after Somalia terminated its alliance with the Soviet Union in late 1977. [] The West's failure to meet these expectations has stirred unrest among midlevel and junior officers and increased pressure on Siad to produce more tangible benefits. [] Siad has managed to contain any immediate threat by placing loyal officers in command of key units in the capital and skillfully playing his opponents against each other. We believe, however, that this maneuver treats only the symptom, not the cause, of the problem and has not prevented the spread of disaffection. []

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In addition to problems within the military, open opposition to the Siad government comes from two armed groups that receive military and economic support from Ethiopia and Libya. Neither organization, however, has been able to expand beyond its narrow tribal base. []

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[] one of them— []

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[] The northern-based Somali National Movement, in contrast, has increased its operations in an effort to capitalize on dissatisfaction over the regime's repressive measures. Many of northern Somalia's Ishaak (Issak) tribesmen, however, remain reluctant to openly support the group out of fear of additional harsh reprisals, according to the US Embassy. []

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While tribalism has limited the appeal of the armed opposition, it has itself developed into a problem of growing concern to the government. In our judgment, Siad's once-broad tribal support base has narrowed in recent years to his Marehan clan and its tribal allies. The US Embassy reports that this group has used its ties to Siad to enhance considerably its political and economic domination of Somalia. Moreover, Siad uses the Army to support the Marehan in tribal fighting or to punish tribal groups that oppose the regime. These actions have contributed to the alienation of large segments of the population and fueled anti-Marehan sentiment. []

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June 1985

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Tribalism also is causing splits within the military. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] younger officers are resentful of the fact that promotions and assignments are based upon tribal connections rather than competence. In addition, after a series of antiregime demonstrations by the Ishaak in northern Somalia in 1982, Siad transferred Ishaak troops from the north to other regions and moved their officers into insignificant positions because he suspected their loyalty. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] this move had a severe impact on military morale and capabilities. [REDACTED]

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Siad has been reluctant to address the country's growing economic problems for fear of alienating his supporters who have enriched themselves under the current system. We believe, however, that the steady decline of the economy last year was the final straw that forced him to initiate major stabilization measures to obtain a crucial one-year, \$22 million IMF credit. According to the US Embassy, the government devalued the shilling, ended price controls, abolished almost all export and import licensing, and instituted several other reform measures. [REDACTED]

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These moves, in combination with Somalia's political and military problems, resulted in sharp criticism of Siad from leaders of the government and the ruling party at meetings in early June. Despite calls for his resignation, however, we believe Siad is likely to weather the challenge. He may use the incident as a pretext to back away from the unpopular IMF austerity measures and probably will deflect the blame for Somalia's woes to his subordinates. His record shows that he is a master at manipulation and exploiting the inability of his opponents to maintain a united front against him. [REDACTED]

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In our opinion, the regime will continue to characterize the fighting along the border as Ethiopian aggression and to play down the role of the dissidents. The US Embassy reports Siad has decided to resume diplomatic relations with the Libyans in an effort to obtain economic assistance from Tripoli and to encourage an end to its support for the Somali dissidents. We believe he will also pursue the Soviet option, although, in our judgment, Moscow—deeply suspicious of Siad—will avoid any binding aid commitments. As a last resort, [REDACTED]

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If Siad is unable to reverse present trends, however, we believe he will face a threat of assassination or a military move to oust him. Although it is likely, in our opinion, that almost any new regime would remain initially pro-West, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] If this were not forthcoming, Mogadishu probably would move toward a more neutralist policy or even explore the possibility of an accommodation with the Soviet Union. [REDACTED]

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Moscow almost certainly would move quickly to try to capitalize on any turmoil following Siad's departure. We believe any attempt to woo Mogadishu would be limited by concern over the reaction from Ethiopia, but Moscow would probably make a serious effort to eliminate the US presence in the region—probably with promises of military assistance or offers to attempt to broker a settlement to the Ogaden problem. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] or run the risk of losing its position in Somalia would rise accordingly, in our judgment.

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Contents

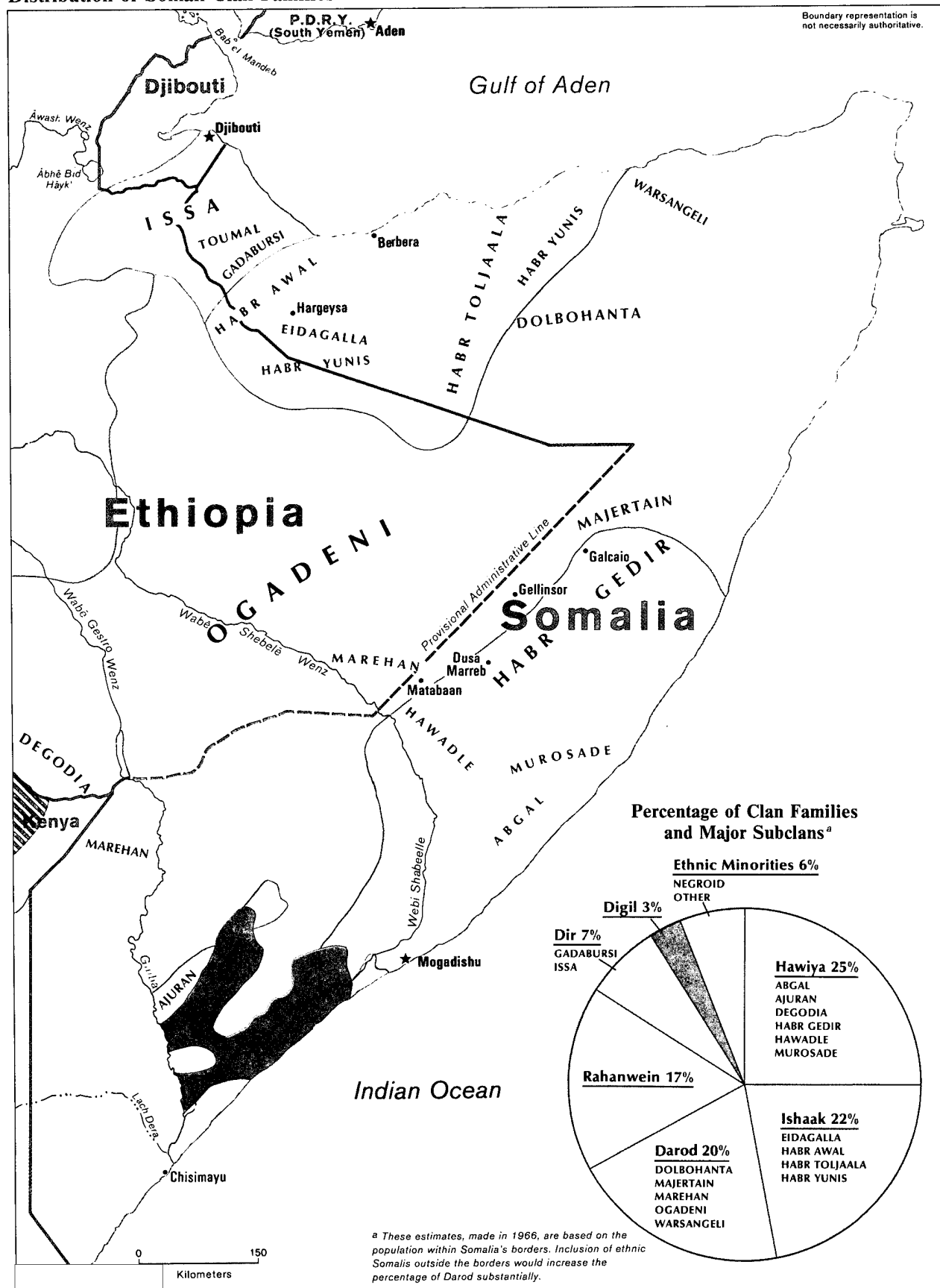
	<i>Page</i>
Key Judgments	iii
Introduction	1
Growing Challenges	1
Regional Military Inferiority	1
Insurgent Threat	2
Pervasive Tribalism	3
Discord Within the Military	3
Social Unraveling	5
The Economic Dimension	7
Short-Term Prospects and Implications	8
Longer Term Scenarios	9
Military Coup	9
Assassination	11
Opportunities for Soviet Exploitation	11

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Distribution of Somali Clan Families



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Somalia: Threats to Stability

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Introduction

[redacted] and economic problems that are working to undermine its stability. Although the President has accepted IMF-recommended measures to qualify for desperately needed economic support, the record shows that he has been reluctant to address the country's more serious political and military issues. As a result, the government has become increasingly isolated from the population, and Siad's once-broad support base has shrunk primarily to his own tribal group and the military.

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[redacted] tribalism,¹ the single dominant factor in Somali society, lies at the root of widespread opposition to the government and has reduced Siad's ability to address Somalia's growing problems. Most recently, however, military unrest, driven by Somalia's clear battlefield inferiority to arch-rival Ethiopia, raises a new threat to Siad's hold on power.

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[redacted] and other US Embassy sources.

Growing Challenges

[redacted] in the face of mounting pressures from the populace, tribal leaders, and the military. In our judgment, [redacted] which is compounding the already formidable challenges of chronic tribal-based tensions complicated by dismal economic performance.

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Regional Military Inferiority

Somali efforts to annex the Ethiopian Ogaden region over the past 25 years have led to a major war, two

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¹ This paper uses the terms *tribe* and *clan* interchangeably.

minor conflicts, and a continuing series of border clashes, which have pointed up the inferiority of Somali forces. Indeed, the military balance has shifted decisively against Somalia since its defeat in the 1977-78 Ogaden war.

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Ethiopia has achieved virtually total control over the Ogaden.² The Ethiopian army has been able to effectively contain Somali guerrilla activity by using mobile units and creating a string of small multiforce operating bases near the main infiltration routes from Somalia. Moreover, according to US Embassy reporting, Ethiopian assistance to tribal opponents of Siad and his Marehan supporters in the Ogaden border area have forced Mogadishu's military to devote its attention to internal security.

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Based on a review of US Embassy reporting, [redacted] we believe that Ethiopian forces along the frontier are clearly superior in quantity and quality to Somali units.

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[redacted] Ethiopian aircraft are able to attack Somali military facilities and conduct air reconnaissance with impunity because of Mogadishu's inept air defense forces. Although Mogadishu scored two victories over the Ethiopian army in border skirmishing over the last 18 months, the Somalis suffered heavy losses in equipment—which they have difficulty in replacing.

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[redacted] and the rising risk of Ethiopian retaliation are fueling unrest within the military and dissatisfaction with Siad's alliance with the United States.

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[redacted] midlevel and junior officers—and some senior commanders—are chaffing under the military's defensive posture, and are increasingly critical of Siad's inability to acquire modern tanks and other armored vehicles to increase the Army's firepower and offensive capability. In addition, there is opposition to Siad's attempt to restrain sizable Army deployments into Ethiopia's Ogaden region. [redacted]

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[redacted] General Ganni frequently disregards the ban by sending regulars across the border to attack Somali dissident camps or other targets. [redacted]

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Insurgent Threat

In addition to the military threat from Ethiopia, Siad and his Army must contend with a nettlesome dissident movement. While we believe the insurgents pose no immediate threat to oust the Siad regime, their activity focuses attention on the political and military problems of the government and could well serve as a catalyst for a future move against Siad by disgruntled elements within the Somali military. [redacted]

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Opposition to the government comes from two insurgent groups that are supported by Ethiopia and Libya: the northern-based Somali National Movement (SNM); and the Somali Democratic Salvation Front (SDSF), which operates in central Somalia. [redacted]

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The Army's continued inability to defend the frontier against Ethiopian attacks and Somali dissident raids, however, [redacted]

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[redacted] Ethiopia controls the influx of assistance to the groups, provides training and operational bases, and occasionally detaches troops for joint operations. For example, [redacted]

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[redacted] They argue that only modern, sophisticated weaponry will give them the capability to prevent Ethiopian and dissident attacks along the frontier. [redacted]

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[redacted] late last year Ethiopian air and artillery units supported northern Somali dissidents infiltrating into Somalia in several engagements with Somali Army units along the border. Indeed, Ethiopian-supported Somali dissidents have attacked successfully Somali Army units—most recently at [redacted]

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25X1 Buuhoodle in December—along the frontier, taking advantage of Somali weakness. According to US Embassy sources, while Soviet and Cuban advisers have only limited contact with the Somali dissidents, they occasionally provide specialized training. []

inducements. The SNM has consistently refused, however, fearing that ties with the Marxist-oriented SDSF would alienate it from its more conservative Ishaak base, according to several US Embassy sources. []

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25X1 The approximately 3,000-man SNM has become increasingly bold in its operations in recent months, attempting to capitalize on growing resentment by the resident Ishaak (Issak) tribe over Mogadishu's repressive policies in the north. Although its military activity continues to consist primarily of small cross-border raids against economic and military targets near the Ethiopian frontier, the US Embassy states that the SNM has been able to establish a military presence in the north since late 1984. []

Somali officials have told the US Embassy that they hope the recent resumption of relations with Libya will end Tripoli's involvement with the dissidents. We doubt that Qadhafi will end all support, however, and, given Siad's difficulties, the Ethiopians probably will continue—and perhaps increase—their assistance. []

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Pervasive Tribalism

Tribalism, which is endemic to Somali society, has become a major concern of the government.³ In our view, it has adversely affected military organization and performance, undermined what little social structure exists in Somalia, and made it more difficult to implement needed economic reforms. []

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25X1 The US Embassy reports that the Ishaak, in the past reluctant to support the SNM openly, have become more involved because of the increasingly harsh measures adopted by General Ganni to maintain order. Late last year, for example, Ganni executed approximately 70 Ishaak for suspected seditious activity and razed several villages that had harbored rebels. According to the US Embassy, Ishaak have provided intelligence and safehaven to SNM forces since late last year, and several hundred Ishaak have gone to Ethiopia to join the dissidents. []

Discord Within the Military. In our judgment, even with adequate equipment and training the tensions among the tribal members that make up the Army—tensions often fostered by Siad himself—will prevent the military from being an effective force against either Ethiopia or the dissidents. []

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25X1 In our view, the fortunes of the SDSF, which draws support from the Majertain clan, have continued to decline, although []

25X1 [] it still has the capability to conduct small-unit raids across the border. Moreover, when assisted by Ethiopian regulars, the SDSF has proved capable of successfully engaging battalion-sized Somali Army units in conventional fighting, as it did at Buuhoodle last December. The organization, however, is rife with dissension caused by ideological, tribal, and personal-ity conflicts, [] Its military strength, which we now estimate to be about 2,000 men based on activity patterns, continues to erode steadily from desertions and defections to Somalia. []

[] Siad uses his control over military personnel actions, for example, to reward loyal officers and to hold in check officers from less favored tribes. []

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[] this has caused resentment among junior and midlevel officers who see their promotions and opportunities for overseas schooling diminish because of tribal factors. []

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Siad's efforts to ensure loyalty by placing trusted members of his family and clan into key military and security posts have also generated opposition. Several

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25X1 [] Ethiopia and Libya have attempted to strengthen the Somali dissident movement by pressuring both groups to merge, offering increased economic and military assistance as

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of these men, [redacted]

[redacted] In addition, Siad's placing of Marehan in command of most military units in the north, and the deployment of Marehan units into the region after Ishaak rioting in 1982, was deeply resented by Ishaak soldiers, [redacted]

[redacted] In that episode, after a series of riots and demonstrations in several northern towns, almost all Ishaak officers and NCOs were transferred from northern posts. [redacted]

[redacted] This lack of trust, in our opinion, became a self-fulfilling prophecy as many Ishaak deserted or defected to the rebels rather than accept assignments in the Mogadishu area or other parts of the country, according to press reports. [redacted]

[redacted] this policy cost the military the use of many well-qualified officers and enlisted men. This mass exodus, however, convinced Siad that his suspicions were valid. As a result, Ishaak in the military are generally discriminated against and, even now, [redacted] are denied permission to travel to the north under any circumstances. [redacted]

Social Unraveling. In addition to affecting the military, Siad's policies appear to us to worsen, rather than ameliorate, tribal tensions that undermine any national support for his government. Tribal fighting, long a feature of Somali life, has not only increased in recent years, but also has taken on more serious political overtones as the government has used the Army and other security forces to support loyal clans. At the same time, [redacted]

[redacted] An abundance of legally and illegally obtained small arms available to the tribal militias also is contributing to the upsurge in tribal fighting, [redacted]

[redacted] In a number of cases the tribal clashes in recent years were extensive enough to involve military intervention. For example:

- In early 1983, elements of the Somali Army supported the militia of loyal Dolbohanta against

Ishaak clans and northern Somali dissidents in fighting initially generated by a Dolbohanta raid against Ishaak camps, according to US Embassy sources.

- In the same year, fighting over water rights broke out between Marehan and Hawiya tribes. [redacted]

- During 1983 and 1984, [redacted] President Siad used the Army and police to disarm tribes considered disloyal to the regime, such as the Hawiya. Generally, Marehan and allied tribes were excluded from this program. This generated strong anti-Marehan feelings among the Hawiya and several tribal subclans along the Ethiopian border.

Although some of the tribal fighting is firmly rooted in Somali culture, Siad's favoritism toward selected groups has worsened tribal rivalries and thus has helped foster violence among clans. Reporting from [redacted]

[redacted] Siad grants disproportionate political and economic favors to the Marehan, the Ogadeni, and other groups whose loyalty he is trying to gain or maintain. These favors include appointments to lucrative government posts, financial support, and opportunities to participate in profitable business deals. [redacted]

While such actions have helped him to retain the support of his tribal clique, they have contributed to alienating large segments of the population from the

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Siad's Early Popularity

During the period of parliamentary democracy in Somalia, from 1960 until the 1969 coup, the country was paralyzed by the proliferation of political parties, almost all of which were based on clans and subclans. The political and economic life of the country was dominated primarily by the Majertain and Ishaak, whose open corruption created deep resentment among the clans excluded from the spoils of the system. [redacted]

After seizing power in 1969, Siad publicly pledged to stamp out tribalism and to make the system more open to all groups. The military council that he led soon announced several sweeping measures, as documented by Embassy reporting, that were generally well received by the populace:

- Tribalism was condemned, and steps, such as the creation of government institutions to perform functions traditionally handled by chieftains, were taken to break the power of tribal elders.
- The Somali language was put into written form and established as the official language, ending years of divisive arguing over this point. In addition, the government launched a massive countrywide literacy campaign.
- Corrupt officials from the civilian government were prosecuted, and incompetent and politically unreliable civil servants were fired.
- The ruling junta gave a high priority to economic and social programs, including the construction of schools, mosques, and sports facilities, reclamation projects, road repair, and well digging.
- In the mid-1970s, Siad began to reassert Mogadishu's irredentist claims on Ethiopia's Ogaden region and revitalized the Somali insurgent movement. [redacted]

Siad's popularity as a whole was further enhanced by Somalia's initial success in the 1977-78 Ogaden war and his expulsion of the highly unpopular Soviet

advisory personnel in November 1977. Ironically, however, these two moves also laid the groundwork for opposition to his regime, which culminated in the Majertain-led coup attempt of April 1978. [redacted]

[redacted] Some officers apparently also believed the expulsion of the Soviets was too hasty, especially in view of Siad's inability to obtain new arms from other sources. Opponents also criticized what they saw as Siad's excessive reliance on members of his Marehan clan for advice, [redacted] and charged that few Marehan were assigned to frontline units during the war. [redacted]

In the postwar period, the Somali economy began to decline. Mogadishu was ill prepared to replace the over 1,000 Soviet civilian advisers who had been expelled, or to compensate for the drying up of Soviet Bloc technical assistance, according to the Embassy. Funding from Arab sources was limited and did not meet expectations; much of it was tied to specific projects such as mosque construction. As a result, the Embassy adds, work on many development projects in Somalia stagnated, and trained professional and technical people, frustrated by wage constraints in Somalia, continued to emigrate to the oil-producing countries of the Middle East. [redacted]

The growing criticism of his government caused Siad to rely increasingly on the Marehan and its allies to firm up his position, according to Embassy reporting. In the aftermath of the coup, many Majertain and others of questionable loyalty were purged. Siad placed an increasing number of Marehan and other loyal tribes into important positions in the government, the armed forces, the security services, and other state agencies. These moves, however, only served to fuel tribal opposition to the government. [redacted]

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regime. At present, the tribal issue is causing serious problems for Siad in Ishaak-dominated northern Somalia. Although the Ishaak are one of the largest Somali clans, they have been relegated to playing a minor role in the country's political and economic life. According to the US Embassy, they are particularly incensed over Siad's failure to fulfill promises to release northern political prisoners or to control General Ganni's brutal suppression of Ishaak opposition. Earlier this year, for example, he ordered the execution of over 70 Ishaak for suspected collaboration in a series of rebel raids in the north. The Embassy also reported that he razed several villages on the pretext that they had sheltered dissidents. []

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Siad has, on several occasions, attempted to pacify the Ishaak by dispatching delegations of tribal elders to the north. []

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The Economic Dimension. The shrinking of Siad's support base to the Marehan, Ogadeni, and their allied tribes has made him increasingly sensitive to their position on reform proposals necessary to revitalize the Somali economy. According to US Embassy reporting, his supporters have used their ties to dominate the economic and political structure of Somalia; consequently, they have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. []

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Even in the best of times, the majority of Somalis have to scrape for a living. Somalia, a society that is over 60-percent nomadic, is clearly a country with limited economic potential. Several World Bank studies indicate that its weak economic foundation—based primarily on the export of bananas and livestock—was hurt by over 10 years of socialist economic management that also provided lucrative jobs for Siad's political and tribal cronies. Moreover, the dedication of approximately 30 percent of the budget to defense spending severely restricts Mogadishu's ability to fund economic development. Somalia's economic problems have multiplied since Saudi Arabia banned imports of Somali cattle in 1983; GDP growth averaged 3.5 percent annually in 1983-84, compared

to almost 8 percent annually in the previous two years, and the current account deficit rose from an average of about \$115 million to over \$145 million during the same time frame, according to US Embassy analysis. []

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Opposition from his supporting tribes caused Siad to reject an IMF stabilization package in early 1984, although it was obvious even then that the Somali economy was in serious difficulty. []

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[] the President was persuaded to reject the agreement by some of his advisers who argued that the IMF provisions would strengthen the Ishaak and other regime opponents, who would then be in a position to funnel additional funds to dissident groups. In addition, Siad feared liberalization of the economy would limit his opportunities to dispense patronage, an important element in maintaining his power base. In our opinion, he also realized that these reforms would have undercut the position of Marehan, whose wealth is based upon their tight control of the government and commercial sectors of the economy. []

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Somalia's balance-of-payments problems reached crisis proportions by the summer of 1984. Aggravated by the breakdown in negotiations with the IMF and a subsequent weakening of fiscal and monetary discipline within Somalia, Mogadishu struggled through the last half of the year without sufficient foreign exchange to cover its debt service or oil import bills, according to Embassy data. The government responded to the crisis by building up arrearages, pressuring Saudi Arabia for oil and balance-of-payments grants, and rationing existing petroleum supplies. []

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Under these intense financial pressures, Siad moved in January to implement many of the adjustments recommended by the IMF to gain a crucial one-year, \$22 million IMF credit. According to US Embassy reporting, the government devalued the shilling, established a dual foreign exchange market to encourage exports and discourage imports, ended price controls, and abolished almost all export and import licensing. Mogadishu also made efforts to meet other

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IMF conditions and to reschedule most of its approximately \$350 million in current and past-due debt service payments owed to the United States and other Western countries. [REDACTED]

Regardless of whether the adjustments actually resurrect the Somali economy over the longer term, however, Siad remains vulnerable to political pressures generated by his acceptance of the IMF program. On the one hand, it appears that Siad stands to gain politically in the north. The stabilization measures, according to the US Embassy, are sure to be well received by northerners and, to some extent, lessen opposition to Siad by allowing the Ishaak to have a larger role in the economic life of the country. They have long complained about the stranglehold southerners have had over the economy and the restrictions that have been placed on them. The adjustments will allow them to keep more of their earnings, give them greater access to foreign currency, and eliminate stringent government controls on imports and exports. [REDACTED]

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On the other hand, these moves pose serious political risks for Siad among his normally loyal supporters. According to the US Embassy, the President is under pressure from three quarters to minimize or even back away from the IMF program: by old-guard socialists; by Marehan who fear losing their hold over the economic structure; and by businessmen—especially importers and distributors—who have been hurt by the exchange rate adjustment. [REDACTED]

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Short-Term Prospects and Implications

The array of problems besetting his regime has galvanized opposing factions and placed Siad under immediate pressure. In early June, leaders of the government and the ruling party used a series of high-level meetings chaired by Siad to push domestic political tensions to the highest point in recent years, launching strong attacks against Siad's policies and calling for his resignation. We believe on balance that he is likely to weather the challenge, but the nature of the confrontation and the new audacity of his opponents suggest that his grip on power has become less sure. Throughout his political career, the President has proved himself a master at manipulating and

exploiting the suspicions and tribal rivalries that divide his opponents. Indeed, a prime factor in his political survival has been the inability of his many opponents to maintain a united front against him. [REDACTED]

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Siad almost certainly views the military as the key to his survival. He must be painfully aware, however, that the Army—heavily involved not only with defending Somalia's borders but also with maintaining internal security—lacks the capability to perform these functions effectively under present conditions. If the Ethiopians were to raise the ante by becoming more directly involved in border fighting or increasing the capabilities of the Somali dissidents, we believe the Army would be overwhelmed and Siad's position seriously threatened. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] He will press his case, in our opinion, that the Army needs more sophisticated weapons to respond adequately to increased dissident activity and to deter cross-border attacks by the Ethiopians. As he has in the past, Siad will continue to reinforce his argument by portraying most of the conflict in the border areas as "Ethiopian aggression," while playing down the involvement of Somali dissidents in the fighting. [REDACTED]

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The economy is a more intractable problem in the near term. Siad's commitment to the IMF program, in our opinion, is far from firm. US Embassy sources state that he expects immediate results that will rejuvenate the Somali economy and deflect criticism from the program's opponents. In fact, several economic observers have noted that, unless there is a sizable and rapid infusion of foreign money into the system, the odds are less than 50 percent that Siad will adhere to the program. He has already attempted to distance himself from the decision to go the IMF route by expressing his personal regret at agreeing to the program and implying that his high-level advisers had let him down. In the face of mounting opposition, he has promised an exhaustive review of the situation to lay the groundwork for fundamental changes. At a

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25X1 minimum, we believe Siad will test the tolerance of the IMF to hold him to the economic adjustment package, while exploring ways to lessen the negative impact of the program on his supporters. []

Siad probably will continue his efforts to find alternate sources of economic assistance. We believe, based upon US Embassy reporting, that the recent decision to renew diplomatic relations with Libya was motivated in part by economic factors. []

25X1 Siad also will continue to raise the specter of an accommodation with the Soviet Union in an effort to pressure the West for aid. The Somalis periodically hold talks with the Soviets, either directly or through an intermediary. []

25X1 [] Moscow, however, has a deep distrust of Siad because of his termination of their friendship agreement in 1977 and subsequent turn to the West, and will be cautious in responding to any overtures. The Soviet Union has little desire to help Siad retain power, in our opinion, and will seek to avoid being used by Siad in his diplomatic maneuvers. []

25X1 [] We believe he is convinced that the strategic value of Somali military facilities— []

25X1 []—will provide him with considerable leverage, especially after the United States has invested economic and political resources into developing them. []

Longer Term Scenarios

Military Coup

If Siad is unable to reverse present trends, he will face a growing threat from his military. It is difficult to gauge the degree of dissatisfaction with Siad in the military, but we believe it has to some extent reached all levels of the officer corps. Reporting from several US Embassy and [] it has gained momentum over the last two years and is becoming more vocal. We do not believe, however, that the military unrest yet poses a serious threat to Siad. He has ensured that loyal officers command the key Army units in Mogadishu, while officers who could pose a threat—such as General Ganni—are located away from the capital. Siad also skillfully plays his officers against one another and encourages personal rivalries. []

Nonetheless, over the longer term we believe the main threat to Siad will come from two groups within the military:

- Senior officers and Marehans who may come to believe that Siad or, at a minimum, high-level subordinates such as Vice President and Defense Minister Samantar must be removed in order to protect their positions. This faction could move to preempt a strike by junior officers or tribal opponents determined to change the status quo. We do not believe ideological factors would play a major part in influencing this group.
- Midlevel and junior officers who blame Siad personally for Somalia's military inferiority vis-a-vis Ethiopia and who resent the domination of the military by Siad's cronies. There have been periodic reports that this group of officers believes the West has not been forthcoming in assistance because it distrusts Siad and the current leadership; in our opinion, this faction believes that a new leadership would be able to restore confidence in Somalia.

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Assassination

Siad clearly has made many enemies in his political career, and could be assassinated by a tribal or ideological opponent—an event that would create a power vacuum and generate a period of serious political instability. There are several senior Somali officers, in our opinion, who would then attempt to assume power—

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—but none of them has broad support within the military or among the tribal groups. We believe, therefore, that a weak coalition of military officers would govern the country until one of them succeeded in putting together a support base that would allow him to dominate the regime.

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Opportunities for Soviet Exploitation

We believe Moscow would move quickly to try and capitalize on the turmoil following Siad's departure from the scene and to influence a post-Siad government. In our opinion, the primary Soviet goal would be to eliminate the US presence in Somalia, if possible, and to establish the USSR as the predominant superpower on the Horn. Moscow's opening to Somalia would be tempered by concern over the reaction of its ally Ethiopia, but we believe the temptation to undercut the US position would be too great for the Soviets to pass up efforts to woo Mogadishu.

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Both groups, we believe, would maintain Somalia's pro-Western orientation if they came to power because they do not oppose the regime's ideological bent. They would, however, expect the United States and other friendly countries to increase substantially their economic and military aid. If this did not occur, we believe both factions would attempt to obtain support from other quarters, such as Libya, and to pursue a more neutral position in foreign affairs.

but not necessarily end to. We believe there is a strong possibility that a junta composed of younger officers would attempt to improve relations with the Soviet Union if its expectations were not fulfilled by the West.

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Moscow's prospects for success would depend to a great extent, in our view, on how easily the transition of power goes in Mogadishu. An unstable or weak government would give Moscow an opportunity to try to enhance the positions of its supporters in an effort to bring to power a regime favorable to it. It also could be expected to woo a successor regime with promises of military and internal security assistance in return for Mogadishu's adopting a less Western-oriented foreign policy. In addition, the Soviets would probably offer to use their presence in Ethiopia to argue that they are in a position to try to broker a political settlement to the Ogaden problem in return for concessions from Mogadishu.

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It is possible, although less likely, that Siad could be ousted by a pro-Soviet clique of officers. We believe that Moscow's many years of involvement with Somalia have left it with some sympathetic elements in the military and security services, but we have no evidence one way or the other that they command key military units or that the military would support a leftist coup.

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Soviet approaches to Mogadishu would increase pressures on [redacted]

[redacted] We believe any successor regime to Siad is likely to view Somalia as strategically valuable after observing both Moscow and [redacted]

[redacted] They will attempt, therefore, to manipulate the superpowers for Mogadishu's gain; [redacted]

[redacted]—even a pro-Western one— which believed it was not receiving fair compensation for their use. [redacted]

[redacted] unless a pro-Soviet faction came to power, but it probably would apply restrictions to US activity, while at the same time attempting to garner additional concessions from Moscow. [redacted]

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